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ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE A18**William Ringle**

Why was Kuwait bomb target?

WHY Kuwait?

Why was that small, oil-rich kingdom the place where the bombing of the U.S. embassy compound occurred?

Though "moderate" and identified with the United States, Kuwait was not a place, like Oman or Egypt, that had allowed U.S. bases.

Relatively scrupulous in preserving its non-aligned status, it had urged other Persian Gulf states to sever all ties with the super-powers.

There is no U.S. domination of the oil business there to inflame radicals. The interest of the West in Kuwait's wells and refineries is peripheral. All are Kuwaiti-owned.

Nonetheless, CBS television had said Aug. 25 that U.S. intelligence had uncovered a plot to blow up the U.S. Embassy in Kuwait which it claimed was being masterminded in Tehran.

Mideast experts suggest these factors may have contributed to Kuwait being the site:

- **Accessibility.** Kuwait "has one of the largest floating immigrant populations in the area," says one specialist. "It was somewhat looser about immigration control than some . . . nations, much looser than Saudi Arabia."

Native-born Kuwaitis come to less than half the population. Partly as a result, the Central Intelligence Agency has estimated

the population at about 15 percent Iranian. The percentage of Shiite Moslems — the religion of Iran's Ayatollah Khomeini — is estimated at 25 percent to 30 percent. Thus, if the bombing had been by one of the fanatic pro-Iranian Shiite sects, like "Hizbullah," which have proclaimed "Death to America," its followers could easily have blended into the Kuwaiti landscape. By contrast, foreigners find it difficult to get into Saudi Arabia and those there are known.

A quarter of Kuwait's population, and many of its ablest civil servants, are Palestinians. If Palestinians took part in the bombing (in retaliation for America's new "strategic relationship" with Israel), they, too, could go unnoticed.

- **Iran-Iraq war.** Although Kuwait has followed an "ambiguous" policy, it has helped Iraq with more than \$6 billion in loans. This has led to three bombings of Kuwait by Iran since the war began in September 1980. Thus, if Iran, or pro-Iranian fanatics, were behind the bombing, they could have achieved the side effect of punishing Kuwait. The fact that the Embassy of ~~Approved For Release~~ supplied warplanes to Iraq, was bombed seems to bear this out. However, the bombing of the French also might be in retaliation for the

- A warning to Gulf States, most of whom are small, timid and vulnerable. The bomb-

ing also may have had another by-product, signaling that "this is what happens in countries that play up to the United States." The inclusion of an industrial complex, a power plant and the airport as targets would seem to imply this. Iran also has tried to intimidate the Gulf states by threatening to halt all oil exports from the Gulf.

- **Precedent.** On Bahrain, a small, Sunni Moslem Gulf island earlier this year, police arrested more than 70 Shiites who they said plotted to kill the royal family. Most of them were said to be Bahrainis trained in Iranian camps. Last year Kuwait may have provided some new trainees for those camps when it expelled 20,000 foreigners, many of them Shiites.

Earlier this year, John McMahon, No. 2 man in the CIA, had said that among the agency's major concerns was the radical Shiite movement's threat to take control of Kuwait.

In Kuwait, fanatic Shiite fundamentalism has been making headway, particularly among the young. Fundamentalists now reportedly dominate student unions. Criticism of Gulf states' political and military reliance upon the United States is a cardinal principle of the fundamentalists.

William Ringle is chief correspondent for Gannett News Service, specializing in reporting on military and diplomatic affairs.

Casey's smart (and rich), but does he run a

TINKER, TINKER, TINK

BY MORTON KONDRACK

UNITED STATES intelligence apparently had an idea that the so-called Party of God, an Iranian-connected, Syrian-protected Shiite Moslem group that car-bombed the U.S. Embassy in Beirut last April, was planning an attack on U.S. Marines. But U.S. intelligence did not have agents inside the group and therefore could not warn with precision that it was planning the truck-bombing that killed more than 230 Marines on October 23. U.S. intelligence knew, too, that Cuba and the Soviet Union were militarizing Grenada, but again the United States had no intelligence agents on the island and underestimated Cuban troop strength. The U.S. had not penetrated Maurice Bishop's New Jewel Movement, and did not know that Bishop's colleagues were planning to oust and kill him. And when Prime Minister Eugenia Charles of Dominica reported to the White House press on October 25 that "we noted with great interest the movements between Soviet Embassies and known activists" prior to Bishop's assassination, it also was news to White House policymakers.

On the other hand, the Central Intelligence Agency did predict correctly that the Soviet Union would not invade Poland in 1981, but would crack down through Polish authorities instead. Using its superb technical capabilities, U.S. intelligence was able to develop a precise analysis of how Korean Air Lines' Flight 007 was tracked by the Soviet Union, lost, found again, and shot down. And, several months before Leonid Brezhnev's death, the director of Central Intelligence, William Casey, reported to President Reagan that Brezhnev likely would not be succeeded by a collective leadership, as agency analysts had concluded. "Chernenko peaked too soon," Casey wrote Reagan in a memo. "Kirilenko

faded in the street bet money, I'd sa across the board

Casey's prescience, is likely to ing to well-inform more disturbing tell the President dropov had push



DRAWING BY VINT LAWRENCE FOR THE NEW REPUBLIC

Casey was kidnapped by the Red Brigades in Italy, the C.I.A. dug hard to discover who had him and where; but U.S. officials say that in general, journalists like Claire Sterling have put together a better picture of international terrorist networks than the C.I.A. When Turkish gunman Mohammed Ali Agca shot the Pope, they say, the President found out more about Soviet and Bulgarian involvement from *Reader's Digest* than from U.S. intelligence.

The C.I.A. can't know everything, but the Republican Party correctly declared in its 1980 election platform that "the United States requires a realistic assessment of the threats it faces" and "must have the best intelligence capability in the world." The platform said, "Republicans pledge this for the United States." Three years into this Republican Administration, the United States certainly has a better intelligence capability than it did in 1980—it could hardly fail in that—but overall it is still far from the best in the world. Can William J. Casey make it so? Well, he gets credit for trying—even from his adversaries—but there's reason to doubt that he can.

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Reagan Set to Grapple With Space-Based Missile Defense Decision

By Patrick E. Tyler
Washington Post Staff Writer

President Reagan is scheduled to meet with his national security advisers Wednesday to make the first in a series of decisions on whether to try to develop and test high-technology weapons, some of them based in outer space, capable of repelling a nuclear attack on the United States or Europe, according to a senior administration official.

The official said little doubt exists among Reagan's senior advisers that the president intends to take the first step toward developing weapons to defend against nuclear attack, an idea Reagan first espoused in what has become known as his "Star Wars" speech last March.

The deployment of a large-scale defensive ballistic missile system would be a dramatic departure from the strategic relationship between the United States and the Soviet Union, which is based on deterring attack through maintaining balanced offensive arsenals capable of mutual assured destruction in the event of war. The 1972 anti-ballistic missile treaty between the two nations limits each side to defending one site with ABMs.

The decision to embark upon long-term development of the new weapons comes at a time when ten-

sions are already high between the United States and the Soviet Union over U.S. deployment of medium-range nuclear missiles in western Europe.

The senior administration official, who spoke on the condition that he not be identified, noted that the options prepared for the meeting of the National Security Council are variations of a plan to go forward with a ballistic missile defense program

"He's got before him a bunch of options, any one of which he chooses is a research and development program," the official said.

According to the official, Reagan reached the tentative conclusion last

spring to pursue a defensive capability against nuclear weapons after a detailed review of plans to modernize U.S. strategic forces.

Reagan reportedly concluded that technology in coming decades will render U.S. offensive missiles, bombers and submarines more vulnerable. According to the official, Reagan believes that the best way for the United States to cope with this "emerging instability" is to develop a ballistic missile defense.

"The president has realized that maintaining an adequate deterrent was becoming more and more difficult," the official said, adding that "what the president wants is to leave a legacy where a better family of choices will be available to his successors [so they] will be able to make the deployment decisions."

The official said that "the key" to the president's commitment to pursue defensive weapons is the leverage that he thinks would be gained by the United States in arms reduction negotiations.

He said the president has emphasized coupling each step of the ballistic missile defense program to the arms control process.

In addition, he said there is a consensus in the administration that the Soviets have under way a long-term program to develop sophisticated defensive weapons, but, he added, this was not the primary factor in the president's thinking.

"We have no evidence that they [the Soviets] are about to put up a system that is going to change the balance of power," the official said, "and we believe that if we do nothing, they will

achieve that. What we are proposing to do is join the same race. And we think we can probably win simply because we have a so much broader technological base to draw on."

The strategic defense program was initiated in March when the president, during a nationally televised speech, announced he was mobilizing the scientific community "to define a long-term research and de-

velopment program to begin to achieve our ultimate goal of eliminating the threat posed by strategic nuclear missiles."

A scientific panel headed by former NASA director James C. Fletcher spent five months evaluating a broad array of technologies that might be used for ballistic missile defense and produced an eight-volume classified report for the NSC.

The recommendation that the president go forward reached Reagan Oct. 18 from a senior interagency group that included Paul W. Thayer, deputy defense secretary; Kenneth W. Dam, deputy secretary of state; John McMahon, deputy CIA director; George A. Keyworth II, presidential science and technology adviser, and NASA Administrator James M. Beggs.

The senior administration official offered a harsh characterization of some prominent critics who have attacked Reagan's "Star Wars" speech. These critics have said that even the breakthrough technologies being touted by the president's advisers can be defeated by new Soviet countermeasures. Some have accused Reagan of trying to gain a first-strike advantage over the Soviets as a means to coerce arms-control concessions in a highly provocative way.

"Don't be deluded by the... traditional dozen or so arms-control advocates from the scientific community," the senior official said. "Al-

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